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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are presented for planning and financing European study tours at the community college level. First, a rationale for incorporating study tours of Europe within the community college curriculum is presented and the benefits of such tours in providing students with experiences they could not normally have are outlined. Next, the paper offers suggestions to help avoid potential problems: e.g., a course to prepare students with background information and basics about travel should be taught the semester prior to the tour; two or more disciplines can be the focus of one tour; and the tours can best be offered every other year at a community college. Then, money-making projects to involve students in helping to finance the tour are suggested, e.g., a Halloween spook house, art calendars, art auctions, and personal community projects. The following section presents the basic mechanics of a study tour and includes suggestions as to the optimum size of the group; the best time to travel; safety and travel hints; and appropriate behavior in foreign countries. (HB)

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EUROPEAN STUDY TOUR
GUIDELINES

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EUROPEAN STUDY TOUR
GUIDELINES

Vicki L. Mitchell and Kenneth E. Mitchell

Rationale:

A European Study tour at the Community College level can provide an unparalleled opportunity for learning through real life experiences. We have conducted five such tours during the past fifteen years, and are convinced that we have positively affected our student's lives and education with this teaching method.

We attempt to involve the students in the planning and financing of their trips. It has been found that by doing so, they appreciate the experience far more.

This teaching method has proven to be an excellent recruitment and retention tool. It is a unique opportunity students cannot normally have at the community college level.

The following are problems, solutions, basic mechanics, and money making suggestions for such a study tour that we have found through our experiences.

A. Problems Encountered and Suggested Solutions

1. The course should be taught the semester prior to the tour.

   a. Course content can be presented in the normal classroom setting.
   b. Students can enroll in the "course" even though they will not be on the tour itself. (for less credit)
   c. Maps and guides to museums and galleries to be visited can be presented to the students.
   d. Background history, customs, foreign etiquette and language are other classroom topics.
   e. Basics about packing, money management while away, basic hygiene and group cooperation are also important items for discussion.
   f. A term paper and a reaction paper (about the overall impact of the trip upon the student) has been required.

2. Two or more disciplines can be offered in conjunction with one trip. (Example: art, literature, drama).

   a. This provides an opportunity for a variety of students to participate.
   b. This provides more varied experiences for the students.
   c. Teachers can each hold their lecture classes independently and join with the other classes for special sessions on "survival language," customs, etc.
   d. Teachers from different subject fields are afforded the opportunity of interdisciplinary learning with their colleagues.

3. The instructors should have their trip paid by the institution.

   a. The cost could be covered from the class enrollment fee.
   b. It must be remembered that such a trip is a 24-hour per day job.
   c. Most travel companies offer a free or partial ticket for tour sponsors with twenty or more persons in their group.

4. A physical by a doctor should be required by all trip participants.

   a. Such examinations make the instructor(s) aware of any possible medical difficulties which might arise and medication students might be required to take on the tour.
   b. The instructor(s) should have the option of refusing anyone deemed "a health risk" from participating in the tour.

5. A college liability release must be signed by all students.

   a. Travel insurance should be required.
   b. Ticket insurance should also be carried in case of late cancellations.

6. All fees, tickets, and passports should be paid for by the end of the semester preceeding the tour (about 90 days in advance).

   a. Last-minute decisions and rising cost are avoided by such pre-planning.
   b. Students may tend to wait to pay for passports until the last minute, thinking they can get them back quickly.
   c. This schedule allows time for students to be selected and made responsible for arranging motel and travel arrangements inside the U.S., both to and from departure point.

7. Such a course can be offered for three to five hours credit.

   a. Course expectations are similar to regular on-campus offerings.
   b. Written assignments, tests over material covered, class attendence, and active participation while on tour are all criteria for grading.
   c. Tour days while abroad begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at approximately 4:00 a.m. (exceptions are days in transit and special bus, train or boat trips.)

8. Aspiring directors should travel with more experienced leaders first if at all possible.

   a. Such an experience might be considered faculty development.
   b. Instructors have an opportunity to select and locate sites they wish to include in their student trips. (This saves time later)
   c. For those unexperienced in foreign travel, the first trip may be too overwhelming to be responsible for students at the same time.

9. Such a tour may be most ideally offered every other year at a community college.

    a. This gives every student the chance of taking one tour during his/her college experience.
    b. This provides a more unique offering instead of repetitive, annual tours.
    c. Money-making projects for partially financing the tours have a longer period of time in which to raise funds.

B. Money-making Possibilities (related to a Visual Arts program)

1. Halloween Spook House

    a. Creations of an art environment.
    b. Opportunity for cooperative effort.
    c. Opportunity for leaders to be identified early in the school year (October).
    d. Creative projects.

        1. Mask-making
        2. Creation of sets
        3. Poster and Advertisement design
        4. Money management
        5. Sculpture
        6. Time management

2. Art Calendars

    a. Classroom assignments of a particular theme (painting, drawing or photography).
    b. Involvement of many students (12 to 24 illustrations).
    c. Cooperation with printing department (graphics, layout).
    d. Assembling of calendars.
    e. Marketing calendars.

        1. Door-to-door
        2. Organization, clubs, groups
        3. Posters and advertisement

    f. Autograph party by the artists.

3. Christmas cards and coloring books

    a. Classroom assignment.
    b. Involvement of many students (12 to 24 illustrations).
    c. Cooperation with printing department (graphics, layout).

d. Assembling of calendars.
e. Marketing calendars.

1. Door-to-door
2. Organization, clubs, groups
3. Posters and advertisement

4. Soup Supper or Meal

a. Feature foods from foreign countries.
b. Entertainment originating from countries to be toured.

1. Requires research of foods, customs, etc.
2. Cooperation and division of work is necessary

c. Advertisement and marketing.

5. Christmas Art Auction

a. Features talents of each student.
b. Each art major is required to submit at least one art work.
c. Requires cooperation, marketing, and advertisement, as with other projects.
d. All price ranges of art are sold to enable students, faculty, and community to participate in bidding.
e. Christmas is a good time as persons are looking for gifts.

6. Personal Community Projects

a. Logo designs.
b. Sign making (one student who began by financing his study tour, now he has his own sign company).
c. Tee shirts (silk screening).
d. Fair displays.
e. Window painting.

C. Basic "Mechanics" of a study tour

1. Twenty students and two sponsors seems to be an ideal size to maneuver in galleries, museums, airports, etc.

2. For European tours, Spring seems to be the most ideal time to visit, as the numbers of tourists is less than during the Summer.

3. Each person in the tour can be assigned a number. To check attendance, the instructor can merely have everyone count off. (Example: before leaving each morning from the hotel, on buses, etc.)

4. One of the tour directors/instructors should keep all the airplane tickets.

   a. Security of these valuables is much easier, as ic boarding air carriers, when this procedure is followed.
   b. One person should also purchase all the tickets at museums and galleries in order to expediate purchasing and obtaining group/student rates.

5. One "free day" is provided in each major city to enable students to explore on their own.

   a. A free day is the time from 4:00 p.m. the day before the free day until 8:00 a.m. the day following the free day.
   b. The director(s) must be told each student's destination and mode of transportation as they leave.

6. All students should carry the name, address, and telephone number of the hotels with them at all times and at least $10 for transportation.

7. Regular passport checks should be made in order to assure students and instructor(s) of their safety.

8. Travel agents can be helpful in suggesting the amount of money each student should take for food, entertainment, and side trips. Instructor(s) may check to be sure each student has enough money before departure.

9. Students may prefer to travel with older luggage. Treatment of luggage at airports is often rough.

   a. It is suggested that the total groups's luggage is marked strikingly in a similar manner to be easily recognized.
   b. One responsible student can monitor the group's luggage at loading and unloading points.

10. Money belts are a very effective means of securing money, passports, travelers checks, etc. (We require them)

11. Itineraries should be sent to parents, family, or guardians before departure. These should include the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the hotels abroad.

12. Since schedules are often irregular during the tour, (because of museum hours, crowds, etc.) it is helpful if each student carry an ample supply of nutritional bars or an equivalent with them.

13. Try to fly out of a major city for better rates.

14. Block U.S. tickets in advance for group benefits.

15. Each person should take two pairs of walking shoes.

16. Be sure students carry proper attire if a theater evening or similar event is planned.

17. Be sure that all women carry proper hygiene materials as menstral cycles can be effected by climate, altitude, and unusual stress situations.

18. Be emphatic about illegal drug useage abroad! Be sure all the students are aware that their possession of such drugs can jeopardize the entire group.

19. Don't promise to see any specific thing. (We say "every attempt will be made to see...") Many places are temporarily closed for restoration. Groups may also encounter unexpected strikes or holidays while on tour.

Conclusion:

We have found our study tours and money-making projects to be very rewarding experiences for ourselves; and especially for our students.

An exciting benefit besides this, is the comments we receive from the students themselves and from their parents. Most of these comments are about the maturation and world concept with which our students return home.

For further information regarding this teaching technique, please write or call:

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